

# Getting Under the Hood of the Automobile Business

## Lack of Honest Ideals in the Factory and on the Floor Is Fouling the Sales-Cylinders of the Motor Car Industry

By C. E. T. SCHARPS

The automobile business is better off financially and worse off potentially than perhaps any other industry in this country. It contains too many concerns that don't care whether their customers are satisfied or not. All they want is to get cars out. The demand has been so great that anything got by. The time has come to separate those who are merely getting by from those who deserve to prosper. I know there are many concerns building good stuff and marketing it right. I know, too, that there are too many which have no interests outside of financial profit. The Tribune is going to tell which concerns are right and which are wrong.

Automobile making in this country has grown to tremendous size in twenty years. That is no reason why the industry should be full of crudities and misunderstandings. Or, if it is an excuse, it is the only one that I know. It is fair time that the business got through the crude formative period and settled down to better business methods. It is time to bring to the bar those who are marketing mechanical mistakes, hastily conceived and brought forth, with an eye single to big production and big dividends. The public is getting tired of paying in repair bills for the design and testing work that should have been done before ever the cars left the factory.

I know, too, that car owners are tired of doing business with automobile dealers who are not merchants. Some of these dealers represent the best made cars, too. They prove they are not merchants by their failure to render satisfaction in unequivocal style to their customers. Reputable car makers ought to cast loose from such dealers and the public ought to be freed from the necessity of doing business with them.

Don't think for a minute that it is only the small concerns in the automobile business that aren't playing fair with their customers. Of course, it is the little fellow struggling hard to get along that might be imagined as likely to use every dodge and twist to get business, regardless of methods. But the automobile industry has a certain element of "big little rich fellows," who sacrifice reputations to profits. They do not recognize that a leader in public estimation should be in all respects a model to the trade. If the morals and standards of the big ones are wrong, where is the public to turn for satisfaction? Present practices cannot go on and leave the industry in a healthy condition.

Two things in particular about the automobile business I have heard made the subject of the greatest complaint by automobile users. They are "service" and "factory warranties." Just what service is, is rarely explained in advance to a customer, because the non-merchant automobile dealer is afraid he will lose sales if he explains too much. That's a fine basis for mutual confidence to begin with, isn't it?

Service with some concerns means only to keep in repair from time to time cars that were never right from the beginning. And they expect the customer to accept promptness and courtesy in handling repair work as a substitute for road use of the car. They think any man must be crazy who expects to be reimbursed for the time he has lost and the pleasure he has been deprived of when the car is off the road and in the service station through no fault except the fundamental and innate defects of the car itself.

The warranty under which most cars are sold is highly unsatisfactory. It really guarantees nothing and what little is covered by it is left to the factory—the seller—alone to determine. Where the factory has the right business principles this is all right. Unfortunately, not every automobile factory has such principles. I believe that the only satisfactory warranty for any goods should be simple, plain and unequivocal and should cover every part of the automobile which a manufacturer sells as a unit. But there are too many automobile manufacturers who think a good guarantee is one that works one way. If the factory gets the best of it is a good guarantee. Otherwise, not.

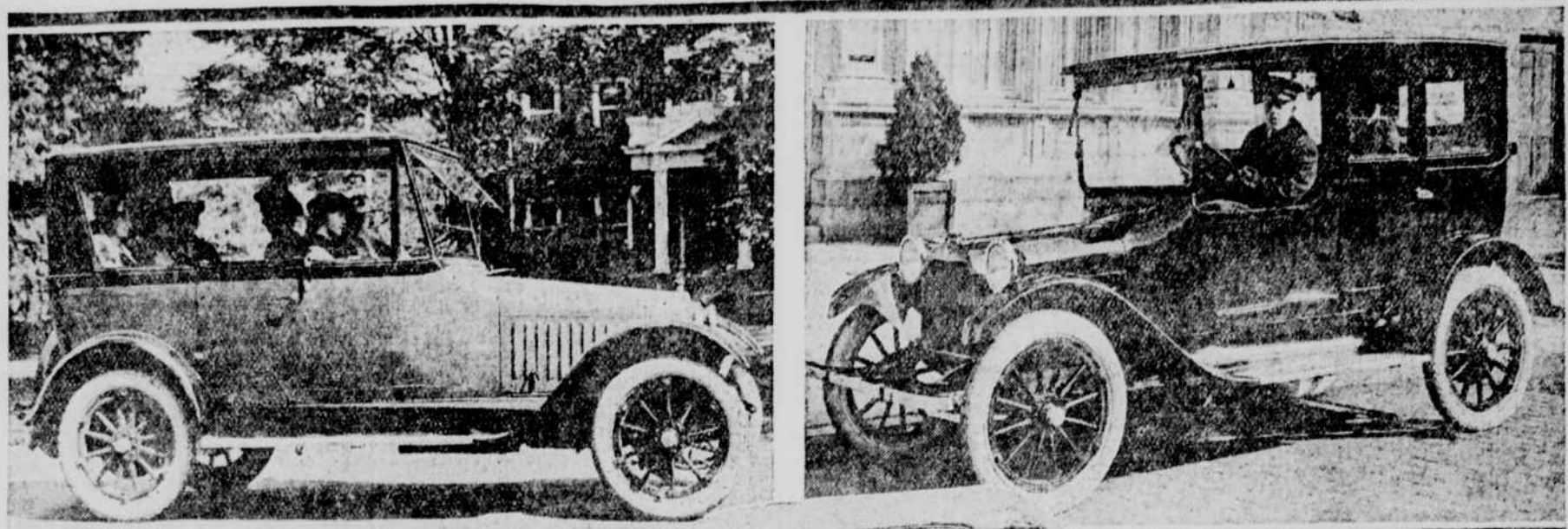
As I write these lines there come to my mind several automobile agencies in New York where a man may do business without fear that anything will be put over on him. And I am also thinking of some others where he couldn't get a square deal, because the deck is stacked against him before the cards are dealt. These conditions are duplicated in every city in this country. There are thousands of persons who own cars and there are thousands more who some day will be car owners. To point out what is wrong, what calls for rearrangement and adjustment in this industry that affects so many thousands of persons, is not only The Tribune's right; it is the plain duty of The Tribune to its readers, whose faith in goods advertised in its columns has come to be unbounded and who measure things by the standards set for them by The Tribune.

To insure that the public receives the fair deal to which it is entitled from the purveyor of any goods is The Tribune's idea. Frankly, there is too much "bunk" in the automobile business. If the automobile industry is to be removed from the field of the "automobile game" to a standard, substantial line, the buncombe and unfair dealing must be eliminated. Automobile makers, their dealers and advertising agents should work rather to the end of keeping the public sold than eternally selling into new fields. As to-day constituted, the automobile business is not stable. It has not the confidence of the public. So it is up to some publication to tell the facts and help the public to know which manufacturers and what cars it can trust.

This is the latest step taken by The Tribune in its campaign for truth in advertising and fair treatment to the customer. Promises unkept; customers flouted; devious guarantees; overworked advertising; "free publicity"; "service" pledges beyond interpretation—these are some of the things found in the indictment of the offenders in the automobile industry. When The Tribune has held the mirror up to the automobile business as it has to other lines the reflection may not be satisfactory to all beholders; but the leaders in the motor car industry will be conscious that their calling presents an appearance that isn't beautiful. And not only the appearance but the ideals within will change, for no one can be really beautiful who is not clean all through.

It is in the interest of every automobile manufacturer who is making a decent car and selling it decently to give attention to the new spirit in motor car merchandising that The Tribune will make better understood. The public will give its patronage—once it understands definitely what it now largely suspects, that all is not right with the automobile business—to those right-minded manufacturers of automobiles. In helping to purge the automobile business

SEDAN, CABRIOLET OR LIMOUSINE, WHICH TYPE DO YOU LIKE BEST?



## TIRE PRICES UP 15 PER CENT

New Lists Coming Out  
Next Month to Show  
Higher Figures

FABRIC IS BIGGEST  
ADDED EXPENSE ITEM

Rubber, Labor and Over-  
heads All Rising, with  
No Relief in Sight

Advances in the prices of tires, as forecast in The Tribune a fortnight or more ago, is the subject of an article in "Automobile Topics" out yesterday. Labor, materials and overhead costs all have advanced in such ratio that a 15 per cent increase in tire prices the first of the new year is said to be inevitable. Crude rubber prices are high, but the rising charges for fabric make it sure that tires must go up.

To quote in part the trade publication mentioned: "The 1917 crop of Egyptian cotton cannot possibly get into the mills of the American tire makers before the middle of January, 1918. The crop of American cotton, only small quantities of which are employed by the tire makers, together with the Sea Island, will not be available until the middle of October, 1917. Between the cotton field and the tire factory intervenes a long period of seasoning, spinning, conditioning and weaving, and quite apart from the question of supply, as relating to quantity and quality, the labor and materials situation calls for requirements of their own affairs by the intermediate crafts. So far as the fabric question alone is concerned, therefore, it looks as though there were no relief in sight for at least two years.

The labor cost in tires is up about 15 per cent, while at the same time the average price of materials has advanced more than 30 per cent. Overheads have risen 25 per cent also, making an average of about 25 per cent advance in the total cost of the tire, no matter of size, despite the employment of the most rigid economies.

"Due to these economies, however, particularly those made in the way of reusing, selecting and distributive systems, the actual advance to be made will tend to absorb only a part of the total increase in cost of manufacture. For this reason it is probable that about 15 per cent will mark the average advance in lists.

"Even so, it is not unlikely that some of the smaller companies will have before them an exceedingly perplexing problem when present material stocks are depleted and it becomes necessary to replenish them at prevailing prices. The pinch is likely to be felt during the last six months of next year, although even to-day it is not possible to purchase tire materials at anywhere near the market range of a year ago.

"The association of rubber and tires has always seemed so close that it will come as a surprise to most of those who deal in tires to find that rubber itself has been relegated to second place. While to-day rubber ranks around 85 cents, with the future expected to bring it even lower, this does not promise much relief, for in any event it will not compare with the advances in Sea Island and Egyptian cottons, which even now are selling in the neighborhood of \$1.20. Interruptions in shipping, due to submarine activities in the Mediterranean and elsewhere, and other considerations, practically make certain a continuance of high prices for this material, at least while the war lasts."

## BUICK ANNOUNCES INCREASE IN PRICES

The Buick Motor Company has announced an increase in prices for all models effective January 15 as follows:

Model	Present Price	New Price
Model 40	\$1,250	\$1,350
Model 42	\$1,350	\$1,450
Model 44	\$1,450	\$1,550
Model 46	\$1,550	\$1,650
Model 48	\$1,650	\$1,750
Model 50	\$1,750	\$1,850
Model 52	\$1,850	\$1,950
Model 54	\$1,950	\$2,050
Model 56	\$2,050	\$2,150
Model 58	\$2,150	\$2,250
Model 60	\$2,250	\$2,350
Model 62	\$2,350	\$2,450
Model 64	\$2,450	\$2,550
Model 66	\$2,550	\$2,650
Model 68	\$2,650	\$2,750
Model 70	\$2,750	\$2,850
Model 72	\$2,850	\$2,950
Model 74	\$2,950	\$3,050
Model 76	\$3,050	\$3,150
Model 78	\$3,150	\$3,250
Model 80	\$3,250	\$3,350
Model 82	\$3,350	\$3,450
Model 84	\$3,450	\$3,550
Model 86	\$3,550	\$3,650
Model 88	\$3,650	\$3,750
Model 90	\$3,750	\$3,850
Model 92	\$3,850	\$3,950
Model 94	\$3,950	\$4,050
Model 96	\$4,050	\$4,150
Model 98	\$4,150	\$4,250
Model 100	\$4,250	\$4,350
Model 102	\$4,350	\$4,450
Model 104	\$4,450	\$4,550
Model 106	\$4,550	\$4,650
Model 108	\$4,650	\$4,750
Model 110	\$4,750	\$4,850
Model 112	\$4,850	\$4,950
Model 114	\$4,950	\$5,050
Model 116	\$5,050	\$5,150
Model 118	\$5,150	\$5,250
Model 120	\$5,250	\$5,350
Model 122	\$5,350	\$5,450
Model 124	\$5,450	\$5,550
Model 126	\$5,550	\$5,650
Model 128	\$5,650	\$5,750
Model 130	\$5,750	\$5,850
Model 132	\$5,850	\$5,950
Model 134	\$5,950	\$6,050
Model 136	\$6,050	\$6,150
Model 138	\$6,150	\$6,250
Model 140	\$6,250	\$6,350
Model 142	\$6,350	\$6,450
Model 144	\$6,450	\$6,550
Model 146	\$6,550	\$6,650
Model 148	\$6,650	\$6,750
Model 150	\$6,750	\$6,850
Model 152	\$6,850	\$6,950
Model 154	\$6,950	\$7,050
Model 156	\$7,050	\$7,150
Model 158	\$7,150	\$7,250
Model 160	\$7,250	\$7,350
Model 162	\$7,350	\$7,450
Model 164	\$7,450	\$7,550
Model 166	\$7,550	\$7,650
Model 168	\$7,650	\$7,750
Model 170	\$7,750	\$7,850
Model 172	\$7,850	\$7,950
Model 174	\$7,950	\$8,050
Model 176	\$8,050	\$8,150
Model 178	\$8,150	\$8,250
Model 180	\$8,250	\$8,350
Model 182	\$8,350	\$8,450
Model 184	\$8,450	\$8,550
Model 186	\$8,550	\$8,650
Model 188	\$8,650	\$8,750
Model 190	\$8,750	\$8,850
Model 192	\$8,850	\$8,950
Model 194	\$8,950	\$9,050
Model 196	\$9,050	\$9,150
Model 198	\$9,150	\$9,250
Model 200	\$9,250	\$9,350
Model 202	\$9,350	\$9,450
Model 204	\$9,450	\$9,550
Model 206	\$9,550	\$9,650
Model 208	\$9,650	\$9,750
Model 210	\$9,750	\$9,850
Model 212	\$9,850	\$9,950
Model 214	\$9,950	\$10,050
Model 216	\$10,050	\$10,150
Model 218	\$10,150	\$10,250
Model 220	\$10,250	\$10,350
Model 222	\$10,350	\$10,450
Model 224	\$10,450	\$10,550
Model 226	\$10,550	\$10,650
Model 228	\$10,650	\$10,750
Model 230	\$10,750	\$10,850
Model 232	\$10,850	\$10,950
Model 234	\$10,950	\$11,050
Model 236	\$11,050	\$11,150
Model 238	\$11,150	\$11,250
Model 240	\$11,250	\$11,350
Model 242	\$11,350	\$11,450
Model 244	\$11,450	\$11,550
Model 246	\$11,550	\$11,650
Model 248	\$11,650	\$11,750
Model 250	\$11,750	\$11,850
Model 252	\$11,850	\$11,950
Model 254	\$11,950	\$12,050
Model 256	\$12,050	\$12,150
Model 258	\$12,150	\$12,250
Model 260	\$12,250	\$12,350
Model 262	\$12,350	\$12,450
Model 264	\$12,450	\$12,550
Model 266	\$12,550	\$12,650
Model 268	\$12,650	\$12,750
Model 270	\$12,750	\$12,850
Model 272	\$12,850	\$12,950
Model 274	\$12,950	\$13,050
Model 276	\$13,050	\$13,150
Model 278	\$13,150	\$13,250
Model 280	\$13,250	\$13,350
Model 282	\$13,350	\$13,450
Model 284	\$13,450	\$13,550
Model 286	\$13,550	\$13,650
Model 288	\$13,650	\$13,750
Model 290	\$13,750	\$13,850
Model 292	\$13,850	\$13,950
Model 294	\$13,950	\$14,050
Model 296	\$14,050	\$14,150
Model 298	\$14,150	\$14,250
Model 300	\$14,250	\$14,350
Model 302	\$14,350	\$14,450
Model 304	\$14,450	\$14,550
Model 306	\$14,550	\$14,650
Model 308	\$14,650	\$14,750
Model 310	\$14,750	\$14,850
Model 312	\$14,850	\$14,950
Model 314	\$14,950	\$15,050
Model 316	\$15,050	\$15,150
Model 318	\$15,150	\$15,250
Model 320	\$15,250	\$15,350
Model 322	\$15,350	\$15,450
Model 324	\$15,450	\$15,550
Model 326	\$15,550	\$15,650
Model 328	\$15,650	\$15,750
Model 330	\$15,750	\$15,850
Model 332	\$15,850	\$15,950
Model 334	\$15,950	\$16,050
Model 336	\$16,050	\$16,150
Model 338	\$16,150	\$16,250
Model 340	\$16,250	\$16,350
Model 342	\$16,350	\$16,450
Model 344	\$16,450	\$16,550
Model 346	\$16,550	\$16,650
Model 348	\$16,650	\$16,750
Model 350	\$16,750	\$16,850
Model 352	\$16,850	\$16,950
Model 354	\$16,950	\$17,050
Model 356	\$17,050	\$17,150
Model 358	\$17,150	\$17,250
Model 360	\$17,250	\$17,350
Model 362	\$17,350	\$17,450
Model 364	\$17,450	\$17,550
Model 366	\$17,550	\$17,650
Model 368	\$17,650	\$17,750
Model 370	\$17,750	\$17,850
Model 372	\$17,850	\$17,950
Model 374	\$17,950	\$18,050
Model 376	\$18,050	\$18,150
Model 378	\$18,150	\$18,250
Model 380	\$18,250	\$18,350
Model 382	\$18,350	\$18,450
Model 384	\$18,450	\$18,550
Model 386	\$18,550	\$18,650
Model 388	\$18,650	\$18,750
Model 390	\$18,750	\$18,850
Model 392	\$18,850	\$18,950
Model 394	\$18,950	\$19,050
Model 396	\$19,050	\$19,150
Model 398	\$19,150	\$19,250
Model 400	\$19,250	\$19,350
Model 402	\$19,350	\$19,450
Model 404	\$19,450	\$19,550
Model 406	\$19,550	\$19,650
Model 408	\$19,650	\$19,750
Model 410	\$19,750	\$19,850
Model 412	\$19,850	\$19,950
Model 414	\$19,950	\$20,050
Model 416	\$20,050	\$20,150
Model 418	\$20,150	\$20,250
Model 420	\$20,250	\$20,350
Model 422	\$20,350	\$20,450
Model 424	\$20,450	\$20,550
Model 426	\$20,550	\$20,650
Model 428	\$20,650	\$20,750
Model 430	\$20,750	\$20,850
Model 432	\$20,850	\$20,950
Model 434	\$20,950	\$21,050
Model 436	\$21,050	\$21,150
Model 438	\$21,150	\$21,250
Model 440	\$21,250	\$21,350
Model 442	\$21,350	\$21,450
Model 444	\$21,450	\$21,550
Model 446	\$21,550	\$21,650
Model 448	\$21,650	\$21,750
Model 450	\$21,750	\$21,850
Model 452	\$21,850	\$21,950
Model 454	\$21,950	\$22,050
Model 456	\$22,050	\$22,150
Model 458	\$22,150	\$22,250
Model 460	\$22,250	\$22,350
Model 462	\$22,350	\$22,450
Model 464	\$22,450	\$22,550
Model 466	\$22,550	\$22,650
Model 468	\$22,650	\$22,750
Model 470	\$22,750	\$22,850
Model 472	\$22,850	\$22,950
Model 474	\$22,950	\$23,050
Model 476	\$23,050	\$23,150
Model 478	\$23,150	\$23,250
Model 480	\$23,250	\$23,350
Model 482	\$23,350	\$23,450
Model 484		